Will Graham's Hidden Talents

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Will Graham's Hidden Talents

by Watermelonsmellinfellon

Summary

Hannibal has gained enough of Will's trust to see behind the curtain. Will has some secret skills Hannibal would never have expected of him. Knowing things about Will that no one else knows is an appealing notion and brings them closer together.

Notes

This is for Misery9980, who is a sweet bean.

See the end of the work for more notes

Abstract

A/N: Hello, people!

I don't own Hannibal.

I have no beta.

ENJOY!

CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

~.O.~

When Hannibal opened his office door that evening to welcome Will Graham inside, he hadn't expected to see the man standing right at the door with a massive, unmarked pizza box in hand. Usually he was pacing back and forth and blinking due to the discomfort of his own thoughts, but this time he was merely tapping his foot in an agitated rhythm and refusing to meet Hannibal's gaze.

"Hello, Will."

"I made you something."

A light flush dusted the other man's cheeks at his sudden revelation and his blue eyes looked away for a second. His forthright response had embarrassed him since he'd barely let Hannibal finish speaking before he started to as well.

To say Hannibal was shocked would have been an understatement. Rarely did anyone ever make *Hannibal* something. He hoped it wasn't pizza, though it certainly didn't smell like there was pizza in the box. Or any kind of food in the box. But even if there was, he'd accept it simply because if it was from Will and the other man going out of his way like that should be celebrated. Also, to refuse when it seemed so very important to Will, would be quite rude.

Will shuffled into the office and proceeded to place the box on Hannibal's desk. "Well technically I didn't make it for you but it made me think of you when it was finished and I decided it would best go to you instead of just leaving it to gather dust or selling it to someone who wouldn't appreciate it for what it is."

He made no move to reveal the contents of the box yet. Instead, he began running his hands down his face and through his mess of curly hair in an obvious attempt to regain some composure. It was a familiar grasp for control from Will. His agitation was palpable.

Hannibal was charmed.

"I'm certain I will admire it all the same," Hannibal assured him. After all, how often did Will give things crafted by his hands alone, to other people? Hannibal was certain it was done very rarely and he felt… touched that Will thought of him at all after whatever he'd done. It also meant that he was becoming more important in Will's eyes. Someone to look to for friendship and other things of that nature, which was an appealing thought.

"I like using acrylics and repainting objects. Usually vases or wooden tables. I started doing it when I was young in order to center my thoughts and just have some semblance of peace. I do other creative stuff too but for the most part it was a nice way to think and to make a quick buck should I need it."

Hannibal's face no doubt displayed his interest in the topic of conversation as Will was revealing some parts of his life he wouldn't reveal to just anyone. It was Hannibal who got to learn these things and he appreciated the small chances he got to peer behind the veil concealing Will Graham's most precious memories. It was a show of trust from Will and it gave Hannibal a chance to know something others didn't. He always loved knowing more than everyone else.

It elevated him further above them.

"So you slip the mouth of a vase over something of similar size like a stand, and then place that on top of a canvas that will catch the excess paint so it doesn't go to waste. You mix complementary colors of acrylic paint in a plastic cup and then pour it over the bottom of the vase however you want, and keep going until it's fully covered. Let sit for several minutes while the paint drips onto the canvas. When you feel ready, move the stand and vase elsewhere to continue drying and then shift the canvas around until all sides are covered in paint, and the paint will create odd patterns and shapes as it dries, for a nice abstract effect."

The explanation was rushed and Hannibal almost didn't catch all of it, but when his mind finally registered everything, he found himself even more interested than before.

"I used to sell these all the time outside of shops that allowed me too. Less so now since Etsy is a thing I have access to. Even when using the same order of paint or the same pouring motions, nothing ever comes out the same. But similar colors and styles could make a series that would sell for much more than a single painting would. And I would sell the re-painted objects too because I sure as hell don't need them."

It might help explain why Will was able to live in such a large house on his own with seven canine companions who were all properly taken care of. Working for the FBI as a professor wasn't exactly a better pay than a normal university professor would make. The salary wasn't bad but it wasn't great either. Extra money from a side hobby made sense in a way.

And he was endlessly fascinated to learn that Will had an artistic streak. He'd seen the piano in the man's home and had assumed he played. No one who grew up relatively destitute like Will, would spend the money they earned on a piano if they never intended to use it after all. It would do more harm than good when money could no doubt be used for something more important for continued survival.

"So this came out completely unexpectedly. I did nothing to make this happen. I simply poured paint, tilted the canvas a few times to spread said paint around, and then left it there for several days. When I came back to check on it, it had become this, and it reminded me of you first and foremost." Will's hand quickly fiddled with the box and then pushed the top up.

What he withdrew made Hannibal's breath halt in his chest.

For the most part it was indeed abstract. Dark and light reds, oranges, and yellows, and then pitch black paint streaking through it all. The black made four solid shapes in the center of the canvas while the reds, oranges, and yellows made a flame-like pattern stretching out toward the edges. The black, jagged shapes looked very much like the eyes, nose, and mouth of a demented skull with a grotesque grin on its face. The fact that Will thought of Hannibal first when he saw the end result of his work, made Hannibal both elated and concerned.

How closely had Will seen him? Was his *'person suit*' as Bedelia called it, coming apart at the seams?

But Will was giving him something he'd made himself because he thought it would fit Hannibal somehow.

He wasn't wrong. It made Hannibal think of his memory palace and the sanctuary he found there whenever he needed a moment away from reality. It made Hannibal think of metaphors and murder. A delightful combination.

"It's beautiful," Hannibal confessed, honesty seeped into every word. He ran a curious finger over the face of the painting, feeling the gloss and admiring the view.

Will's twitching died down a bit and he looked up. Not exactly meeting Hannibal's eyes but close enough to give the illusion of eye contact. He was stepping further out of his comfort zone than normal for this and Hannibal was pleased by his efforts.

"You're not offended that the first thing I thought of when Death appeared on my canvas, was you?"

"A terrifying yet striking figure of great power and inevitability. Beautiful in its darkness. And you thought of me, dear Will. Quite flattering."

Another, endearing flush worked its way across Will's face. "Sounds better when you put it that way," he agreed.

Hannibal could already envision the dark ochre border he'd put around the canvas, and then he'd hang it up somewhere he knew it would spark conversation in his home. Then he could gloat about who had gifted it to him, giving him more chances to talk about Will Graham.

"Thank you, Will," Hannibal said, accepting the canvas and taking a second to determine the measurements. At least 30″x40″ and he could have a frame custom made for it easily. There was even a specific design he had in mind.

Will smiled a calm smile that spoke of more inner peace than Hannibal had ever seen in Will before. "You're welcome. Hannibal."

He felt like this was a victory of a sort, and he liked the feeling very much.

~.O.~

A/N: The first one is done!

How was it? Let me know!

Check out my many other fics!

See ya! :D

CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

2 Truths, 1 Lie

Chapter Summary

Will is very good at spotting direct lies. In a way, this lets Hannibal get to know him a little better.

Chapter Notes

Since we got to 100 Kudos so quickly, here's the next chapter! ^-^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A/N: Hello, people!

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CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

~.O.~

"I'm really good at spotting direct lies," Will confessed during their next session. Instead of talking about the most recent case or him teaching the trainees or even his nightmares, he's decided to start their weekly scheduled conversation with that of all things. Rarely did Will begin the conversation either, it was usually Hannibal asking how he was doing, how his day had been, and then transitioning into darker topics of conversation.

Hannibal was suitably interested and concerned all at once. Concerned for his continued well-being and freedom, and interested because once again Will was talking about himself willingly and Hannibal liked that. He liked that he made the man feel comfortable enough to volunteer information. He liked being one of the few people who got to learn about all the unique sides of Will Graham. Hannibal coveted much and that which no one else had would always be at the top of his list.

"In the lab today, Beverly somehow suckered Price and Zeller into a game of **2 Truths, 1 Lie** in order to make things a bit more lively," Will's mouth twitched at the small joke since the

team typically worked with dead bodies only. "It was like she was a mind reader. She practically left them flayed and twitching by the time she was finished. And then she challenged me and when I tried getting out of it, she suddenly got all smug and asked if my skills don't extend past crime scenes."

"So you decided to humor her," Hannibal said with a nod of understanding. Will *did* have pride in his skills even if he hated how they made him feel most of the time. His abilities were amazing and were threaded into every part of his life, so of course he would take insult when said skills were challenged or questioned.

"Basically," he agreed. "It was… fun. I won of course and it was a nice… bonding exercise that didn't make me feel awkward or make me want to run away."

Will smiled then, a shy twitch of the lips at his own confession.

"Perhaps you would like to demonstrate this ability of yours against me," Hannibal suggested with a smile of his own, curious despite himself. "I'm very good at keeping a straight face."

"Um… sure. I mean, if you want to, that is," Will agreed with slight hesitation.

"I shall begin. I play the violin. I secretly love Metallica. I once accepted oral sex from a young woman in a hidden alcove of the Norman Chapel in Palermo." Hannibal said it all with a straight face and felt excitement bubbling within. How would Will see through him? Would he even be able to?

Will's face had flushed upon his last comment, so his deduction would be interesting. However, Will was looking him directly in the eye, which he almost never did. His eyes were a unique shade of blue that could look either green or grey depending on the lighting surrounding him. They were beautiful. Hannibal had dedicated an entire room in his memory palace to Will's eyes and the various emotions he'd seen pouring from them.

Those eyes narrowed a bit as concentration settled over Will's features. His right brow arched upward teasingly. "You *can* play the violin, you oddly enough *do* like Metallica, and you *did* receive oral sex in the Norman Chapel, but it was from a man younger than you, not a woman."

Hannibal's grin could not be contained! "Indeed, dear Will. I believe it is your turn."

"Um… okay. I play the piano. I've never eaten sushi. I play the kalimba."

That was certainly tough. Hannibal knew about the piano, which left him the other two. Plenty of people never ate sushi, be it real sushi or the poor imitation sold in subpar restaurants all across America. But few people even knew what a kalimba was and obviously wouldn't have known if they had touched one either.

"You don't play the kalimba," Hannibal decided.

Will's triumphant grin told him how incorrect he was. While disappointed at being wrong, he was intrigued by Will's response.

"I actually do! I have one I got from a yard sale years ago and got lessons. I've never eaten sushi."

It was practically an invitation, gift-wrapped for Hannibal alone! He would make certain that Will had only the best. Murasaki hadn't wasted her time on Hannibal after all.

He sent the profiler a charming smile and said, "My aunt is a Japanese woman and she taught me the proper way to make sushi. Perhaps I'll have you for dinner one of these nights to introduce you to some. If you'd like to join me."

Will's face flushed, but he nodded his agreement, pleasing Hannibal greatly. "I'd like that, Dr. Lecter."

"Hannibal, dear Will," he corrected smoothly. "We are friends after all."

With a quick nod, Will agreed. "Hannibal." The doctor could see how pleased Will was, but said nothing for the sake of the man's peace of mind.

Hannibal's turn came again. "I read TattleCrime because I find it amusing. My sister is named Mischa and she lives in France with my aunt and uncle. I have a full suit of Samurai armor in my bedroom."

Will snorted. "You definitely have the suit of armor. I'd be shocked if you didn't actually." He went quiet for a few seconds, eyes twitching over Hannibal's face to and fro as he became serious suddenly. "You read TattleCrime because you think that Freddie's work is amusing if a little tasteless. Your sister Mischa however… has been dead for many years and never even made it to France nor did she meet your aunt and uncle."

It was as if someone had taken a lance to Hannibal's heart. The sheer brutality of the admittance left him a little breathless from shock. Will had picked up the micro-expressions of his pain so clearly? Hannibal was certain he'd mastered the pain long again. Then again, his Will was unique and more special than anyone could ever be. If anyone could understand Hannibal, it would be his Will.

There was a surge of pride in Will's abilities and a deep desire to foster their continued growth. Will hadn't simply noticed that it was a lie. He'd revealed the particulars behind it as well.

"Correct. Your turn."

The other man eyed him with concern for a few extra seconds, before conceding. His face went blank instantly. "I'm a virgin. I've never been on a yacht. I'm heterosexual."

That… was a problem.

Will grew up poor and he didn't like socializing with others. Where would he have gotten the chance to be on a yacht, let alone taken the offer? But Will also never talked about his sex life like many people who sat in the same chair as him. And he gave Hannibal no indication that he was interested in more than women. His interest in Alana Bloom was very obvious to

anyone watching but he'd shown no interest in anyone else in the time Hannibal had come to know him.

Will did not carry himself as a man certain of his sexuality.

His empathy could either be very good for sex or very bad. A double edged sword. Though that could be said for basically every situation. But sex could at times be the most intimate, or the most detached experience depending upon the persons involved.

"You aren't a virgin," Hannibal decided, his faith in himself falling with every second Will remained silent.

"Actually, I *am* a virgin in the sense of no penetration for me in any way, and have not been on a yacht. I'm attracted to many types of features but have noticed I only form sexual interest after a certain period of knowing someone. Their gender doesn't matter in the attraction. I'm not a straight man, Dr. Lecter."

So Will was Demisexual. Interesting. Hannibal was learning so much useful information. The admittance to virginity was shocking considering Will was forty. What was his definition of virginity? He said no penetration. What type? Any type or a specific type only? Did he mean himself being penetrated or him doing the penetration?

Nuance is important and English was a sorely lacking language when one needs proper explanations.

"You are indeed impressive at detecting lies, dear Will."

It was good to know for future consideration and how to deal with Will if the time ever came where he needed to.

"You're a surprisingly good liar, Hannibal. Anyone but me would have taken everything you said as the gospel truth," said Will, obviously trying to shift the attention from his accomplishments, to Hannibal. Will was uncomfortable with praise even if he liked it, judging by the flush staining his cheeks.

Very humble.

From there, Hannibal managed to skillfully maneuver the conversation toward other topics, allowing Will to reclaim his calm. After all, he'd remained seated the entire time their little game took place, instead of walking around the office to create space between them. He was growing more comfortable in Hannibal's presence.

Hannibal liked that a lot.

~.O.~

A/N: The first one is done!

How was it? Let me know!

Check out my many other fics!

See ya! :D

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Chapter End Notes

Personally I think it's entirely possible for S1 Will to either be a virgin with barely any experience because he wasn't interested, or be a total sex fiend who is really skilled in a lot of things. There's no in between for my headcanon. I'm sorry.

A cappella

Chapter Summary

> Will has a lovely singing voice. Hannibal can't help but appreciate him all the more. He also gets to wine and dine Will this time.

Chapter Notes

> -I obviously do not own the song in this chapter. In fact, it's considered a Louisiana staple so the potential for Will to have it as a lullaby while growing up is really strong.
>
> -I have feels.
>
> -Hannibal's got it bad but he's not quite there yet.

A/N: Hello, people!

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CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

~.O.~

Sometimes Will was so lost in his own head, thanks to his imagination and the Encephalitis, that he didn't realize he was doing something. In moments like that, Hannibal enjoyed watching him, just to see what he'd do. And if he gravitated toward something that could be used as a weapon, Hannibal carefully removed it from his grasp. Committing violence that wasn't a willing choice wasn't very interesting in his opinion. he'd rather there be feeling behind it, otherwise it was simply a waste of time.

Any feelings, even the most negative sort, were preferable to nothing.

Typically though, Will would just wander back and forth, mumbling to himself. Most of the time it was all unintelligible nonsense, but occasionally he'd talk about a crime scene or the

serial killer of the week.

It was fascinating watching him. Hannibal felt giddy at these times because it was Will at his most vulnerable. Unaware of himself or his surroundings. Somehow managing to drive all the way to Baltimore in this state, without causing an accident. It was impressive what the human brain could micromanage with just the subconscious in control.

Today however, when he opened the door to greet Will, he found him sitting very still in the waiting room, eyes barely focused as they stared straight ahead. He was humming to himself, voice low and pleasing. Capable of carrying a decent tune even.

Will's mouth moved as if he was saying words, but nothing but distant humming filled the room. It was an unfamiliar song to Hannibal. Slow and sad in a sense. Probably very old and from his childhood.

He wondered what put Will in this mindset of bringing up old songs.

And then, just as he was contemplating waking Will up from his stupor, words actually came forth.

"*-ine away. I've always loved you and made you happy, and nothing else could come between. But now you've left me to love another. You have shattered all of my dreams. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are gray. You'll never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away.*"

Will had a lovely voice. Deep and rich and tinged with a southern accent he didn't typically have when speaking. The forlorn look in his unfocused gaze made Hannibal's heart melt. Sympathy for a non-existent problem abnormally welling up inside.

He stepped forward and placed a gentle hand on the back of Will's neck. "Will."

The touch seemed to pull him out of his mind, making him blink for the first time in minutes. Eyes looked around for several seconds before finally landing on Hannibal's own. They blinked some more.

"Dr. Lecter?"

"Hannibal, dear Will. We're friends, are we not?"

Will gave a small nod, though he was obviously too out of it to properly be embarrassed like he usually was. "What happened?"

"I found you humming in my waiting room. You barely seemed present and didn't react to anything until I touched you," he said. It was only a partial lie and Will's skill at detecting direct lies should be drowned under his personal health issues at present. Besides, the lie in question was very small and hard to spot amid all the truths involved.

"What was I humming?"

"An unfamiliar song to me," he answered. Then he began to hum the tune, in hopes of getting an explanation.

Blue eyes widened. "It's a really old song and popular in Louisiana. You Are My Sunshine. We um- we found the body of a middle-aged man today, and this song was playing over and over on his iPod. He'd been listening to it when he was attacked. Beverly checked. It was just a playlist of dozens of covers of this song. We don't know why he seemed obsessed with it, but his wife did mention him being incredibly sad all week."

"And you felt emotionally connected to the song?" Hannibal said.

"My dad would sing the chorus of the song to me to help me go to sleep. It's pretty sweet on its own, but the whole song is actually really sad and a let down."

Considering the verse he'd just heard, he'd take Will's word for it.

"How did I get here?" Will murmured to himself as he moved to stand. "I remember being at the crime scene last."

"You've lost time, Will. I'm not certain you should be allowed to drive if it's gotten this bad." That sounded like something a normal psychiatrist would say.

Will reached into his pocket and pulled out his trusted bottle of Advil. "I'm fine. It's nothing I can't deal with."

The smart thing to do would be to discourage him, but Hannibal was in this for the long haul. He had so many plans and Will getting better soon was not among them. He had so much more he wanted to know first.

"I will defer to your judgment for the time being," he decided, since it sounded clinical enough. "Perhaps, instead of our usual conversation tonight, you come have dinner with me. I believe you've said you've never had sushi before?"

The flush that tinted Will's cheeks was appreciated. "You don't have to do that, Hannibal."

"But I want to, dear Will. I couldn't very well let you sully your palate with something inferior for your first time, could I?"

Was he being suggestive? Yes. Did Will grasp that fact? Apparently. Were either of them going to address it? Probably not.

Lovely.

Will's gaze was fixed on the painting he'd given Hannibal as it had taken the place of ***Leda and the Swan*** in Hannibal's dining room. Hannibal was pleased to note the man's small smile upon seeing it.

Of course he would give Will's work special attention. It was deserved after all. He liked being reminded of it every night.

"I would like to point out that real wasabi is very difficult to grow which makes it incredibly expensive. What most people think is wasabi paste, is just colored horseradish and mustard seed. Real wasabi is very expensive and must be grated by hand. It then must be consumed within minutes so the flavors are still intact."

Will looked down at the small bowl of green paste Hannibal had placed down beside his sushi platter, and quirked a brow. "I've heard it's really hot."

"Real wasabi isn't supposed to taste like horseradish, dear Will," Hannibal explained. "It is meant to compliment the fish. You'll understand when you take a bite."

"And white wine somehow compliments sushi as well?"

"Of course," Hannibal purred.

"You just have a collection of chopsticks on hand as well?" he asked, running a finger over the black pair that had been placed on the platter.

"Always. I have a little bit of everything just in case."

Hannibal always loved to go the extra mile for the sake of presentation. He preferred it if the experience was as authentic as it could possibly get while outside of culture said experience was from. Did that mean they would only use chopsticks for their meal? Yes.

Will seemed to know how to use chopsticks though, which was a pleasant piece of information for later dinners between them.

"I've had Chinese take out, you know. I was one a broke college student. "

Yes, it seemed he definitely would have. Hannibal doubted there were many Americans who hadn't had Chinese take out some at some point.

Hannibal took a seat and smiled. "Please enjoy yourself and do remember to take your time."

Honestly, it was less about Will savoring the food properly, and more for Hannibal getting to look at his mouth while he ate. There was just something about watching Will Graham eat a good meal that made Hannibal tingle just a little.

Not the strangest thing that could arouse him, but definitely a very Will-specific fetish. Hannibal was never this hyper-aware of anyone else when they ate at his table. Will was special.

If he wasn't careful, Will Graham was going to bury himself into every little crevice of Hannibal's memory palace and leave nothing for the doctor behind.

Though… watching how much Will seemed to enjoy himself while sitting at Hannibal's table, made all that concern seem silly. What sane individual *wouldn't* want Will Graham's pleasure-filled expression filling every second of their day?

Hannibal was pleased with himself and his catch.

"Will?"

The man blinked at him curiously.

"Would you perhaps sing me your sunshine song after dinner? I'd quite like to hear the entire song from your voice."

Another delightful flush in response, but despite his embarrassment, Will nodded.

Perhaps he could get Will to sing to him on the regular. Hannibal would very much like that.

~.O.~

A/N: Another is done!

How was it? Let me know!

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See ya! :D

CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

Culinary Skills

Chapter Summary

Hannibal learns that Will has some skills in the kitchen. As a result, he gets everything he wants in the end.

Chapter Notes

Some Will POV in this! The is the end of the story. I leave it up in the air a bit.

-That's partially my recipe for my 5 Alarm Chili. I add more stuff to mine.

A/N: Hello, people!

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I have no beta.

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CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

~.O.~

Will was grading papers - the bane of every teacher's existence - and nibbling on a cookie he'd baked the night before, when his therapist - "Friend, dear Will. We're simply friends having conversation." - walked in. The presence of the man alerted him that one, he'd forgotten that it was Friday and two, he'd missed their appointment as it was way passed 7:30 in the evening.

Fuck. Normally he wouldn't care about how rude it was but Hannibal was different. Will made an effort to be less rude to Hannibal because he actually liked the man.

Hannibal didn't look annoyed or even angry. In fact, he seemed more worried than anything else, immediately looking over Will's hunched form with a calculating gaze, assessing if he was well or not. It made Will feel both guilty and just a little bit fuzzy inside to know that

someone cared enough about him to travel over an hour just to check on his health. He'd never had that before.

"I am so sorry, I gave an essay and I hadn't expected them to take it seriously for once. These are just so time consuming and illegible," he groaned, resting his head on the desk because he was exhausted and just wanted to rest without worry of nightmares, sleepwalking, or waking up in strange places.

Hannibal nodded in understanding. "No harm done. I had been worried when you didn't knock on my office door at 7:30, seeing as you are typically punctual. Besides, I have a twenty-four hour cancellation policy," he remarked, tone oddly fond and grateful.

Will bit into another malformed cookie, as it along with the small tin he'd brought with him that day had been his lunch and dinner. Not healthy in the least but it was rare that he'd make cookies and he felt the need to indulge a bit. Once his tongue touched them, it was damn near impossible to stop. Addictive, which was why he refrained from purchasing the ingredients on the regular. He had already begun putting on weight thanks to all the dinner invitations from Hannibal, and he didn't need to make it any worse than it already was.

"That's incredibly unhealthy," Hannibal remonstrated him, managing to sound disapproving and amused at the same time.

"They're a treat," Will defended, unabashedly grabbing the last and mourning the empty tin that greeted him. "I don't make them often enough, so I thought I deserved a little cheering up and decided to spoil myself for once."

He took his time with the last one, making sure to savor it because he had no more at home and it would be a while before making more.

"You bake?"

Ah, yes. Hannibal loved food. Loved to cook food, especially. Of course learning that Will had some form of ability in the kitchen would make him happy on some level. Or interested at least. The man certainly appeared interested.

"Not often enough," he answered, feeling regretful.

"Does this culinary skill extend to cooking as well?"

There it was!

"A little," he admitted, feeling awkward because he couldn't cook anywhere near the same level as Hannibal did.

"Would it be too forward of me to say that I'd like to sample something of your culinary making?"

Will paused in consuming the last bite of cookie to send Hannibal a look that he most certainly hoped portrayed his feelings on the matter. Also his wonderment over whether or not Hannibal had lost his sanity.

"Hannibal, you do realize that not everyone serves five course meals made with the freshest ingredients, right?"

"Certainly."

"And you know that I would not be the kind to serve a five course meal nor use fresh ingredients as a majority, right?"

"I would assume so given the fact that you barely feed yourself to begin with," Hannibal rejoined with a light smirk that Will found himself mimicking. Mirror Neurons hard at work even with sleep-deprivation looming overhead.

"So then if you were to come to dinner, I'd have one large option as the main part of the meal with like five sides to choose from and not all ingredients would be fresh like you use. Would that bother you?"

He vaguely wondered if he was trying to use the man's own sophisticated palate against him in order to dissuade him from wanting to eat anything Will had cooked. Probably was.

"I wouldn't mind."

Of course he wouldn't. Because Hannibal couldn't find it in himself to be rude to people.

"Fine," Will reluctantly agreed, unable to be rude to the man who had in turn, been nothing but decent to him. "If the food is terrible please do the right thing and tell me so that I may learn to fix my mistakes. I got sick of cooking for people 'cause they weren't honest."

Hannibal smiled, "I'll do my best by you."

"Are you free tomorrow?"

Will was free for once! And if he finished the damn papers, he could start early.

"Indeed. When would you have me?"

"About seven? Have you any allergies or an aversion to particular spices?"

"No. I look forward to tomorrow, dear Will."

Hannibal was already making his way to the door, glancing back once to say, "And Will... do rest well tonight."

Will remained in his seat, wondering what the hell he was thinking allowing Hannibal to manipulate him into cooking him dinner?

Once his grading was finished, he packed his bag and the sadly empty tin that once held cookies, and made his way from the building. In the car, he decided that the weather was cold enough to permit him to make chili. Which meant he'd need to start making it tonight so that it could simmer on low in the crock pot.

So the store was his first destination. He'd need to prepare ahead of time anyway.

After getting five pounds of beef and all the spices required, he basically hunted down the various peppers he could use. He was from New Orleans, he could handle his heat very well. Eight quarts of chili would last him about a week at most if he had it at every meal.

Onto sides would be white rice made with the steamer and cornbread. He'd have to make the bread homemade, which would take longer, but he could do that Saturday afternoon.

It was decided!

All that was left was the extra sharp cheddar for topping purposes and then the ingredients for '*dessert*' which would basically just be a snack. Hell, it could even be considered a separate meal entirely. He always loved having fudge and it was thick enough to be filling on its own.

Will didn't know when or how, but he had simply blinked - or at least thought he did - and he was suddenly in his kitchen, standing over a large crock pot full of bubbling chili. The sun was coming in through the windows and his watch read one in the afternoon.

Will Graham, one o'clock, Wolf Trap, Virginia.

Placing the lid back on the chili, he looked around, wondering how he'd gotten there and just how long he'd been standing, stirring the chili. The house certainly smelled of it, meaning it had to have been hours. Hours of being unaware of anything.

Shaking off the negative thoughts, he decided to start on the rice.

The bread came afterward, followed by the making of the fudge.

It'd been almost a year since he last made some. If only he wasn't losing his mind, he could probably fondly remember this time.

He spent hours and hours basically stalking the kitchen and letting the dogs out twice simply because he couldn't find anything else to do that was of substance. When the dogs began barking, he was able to breathe easy in a sense. That meant Hannibal had arrived and that meant a distraction had finally come along. And Hannibal was very good at grounding him.

Six fifty, always early to be on time.

He promptly let the man in before he could even knock, because what was the point when the dogs had already alerted Will to his presence?

Hannibal was all congenial smiles and soft words. Gratitude for the invitation and eagerness to sample Will's cooking.

"Don't get your hopes up," the teacher warned him.

While Will knew he cooked well, for his palate at least, he wasn't sure Hannibal could handle it.

"I'm sure whatever you've made will be delightful."

Will withheld a scoff because he had a feeling Hannibal was being a little too kind.

Will directed him to the table and said, "I have iced lemon tea, single malt whiskey, or water."

"Tea please. Do you require assistance?"

"Sure."

The doctor set his coat aside and followed Will into the kitchen. Will fetched two mason jars - having collected enough over the years to begin using them as cups - and grabbed the pitcher of tea from the fridge. "We'll need this at the table," he told the man, handing over the pitcher as he grabbed two bottles of water and the glasses and carried them out.

They returned to the kitchen where Will handed the blond some potholders and asked him to put them on the table. Will then carried the pan of cornbread into the dining room and set it down.

Hannibal looked on with interest.

"I must admit I've never seen that kind of bread before."

"Cornbread. It was created by people indigenous to the Americas thousands of years ago, so I'm not shocked that you wouldn't know of it. The slight sweetness will counteract the spiciness of the chili. The rice is just a buffer and a filler."

Will grabbed the cooker and unplugged it, bringing it out to the table as well, along with a serving spoon.

"I've only had chili a few times and each time it was different. I was under the impression that it is supposed to be hot, and yet of the four times I've sampled some, two of them were sweet."

Will's nose wrinkled. "Some people can't handle an assortment of spices. There are many ways to make chili. Beef, chicken, vegetarian, spicy, sweet, or plain. I prefer my 5 Alarm Chili however."

The eight quart crock pot stood impressively on the countertop, taking up most of the room. Will handed a large, deep-welled bowl to Hannibal and nodded toward the pot for him to serve himself.

"I thought residents of Louisiana preferred Gumbo?"

Will smirked, "My father was a Texan. I had a babysitter, Miz Marie. She made Gumbo and Curry all the time for her family and so I managed to learn those from her and learn Chili from my father when he had time to make it."

"What was your process?"

He'd been waiting for that.

"Brown the meat first with basic seasonings and chopped onion and garlic. In the pot I had already begun heating the sauce. Various cans of flavored, diced, and crushed tomatoes, three bay leaves for luck, two cans each of black beans, kidney beans, chili beans, pinto beans, and northern beans. Mixed in the meat and added additional spices afterward. Chili powder, ground black pepper, cayenne pepper, exactly one teaspoon of Carolina Reaper Powder - I always have some around just in case. Then added habaneros, jalapenos, and one ghost pepper because those damn things are expensive. Put it on a low heat and let it sit for several hours."

"That allows the flavors to coalesce," said Hannibal without so much as a blink.

"Yeah," Will nodded, a little speechless.

After labeling himself some chili, fetching a knife, and grabbing the bag of shredded cheddar from the fridge, they were finally able to sit down.

"You might want to have the water within easily accessible reach," he advised with a small smirk. Seeing someone eat 5 Alarm Chili for the first time was always the best. And this recipe had Carolina Reaper in it!

He felt a slight amount of vindictive glee rising within him, because he just knew that Hannibal had never had Carolina Reaper before! He watched almost hungrily as the calm and composed man scooped a spoonful of chili - a rather large one at that - and swallowed it down.

It wasn't a super obvious reaction, not like some Will had seen before, but for Hannibal it was like a broadcast on the world's most famous food network. His shoulders had hunched forward suddenly and his eyes went wide. But he made no noise. It was impressive. Especially since he only downed half the bottle of water, where most would have had the water and the tea and another cup of tea gone in seconds.

Will felt the respect building. He couldn't help it.

"That was-" Hannibal cleared his throat, "-very nice." He sipped at his tea and shook himself minutely. "I could taste all of the flavors individually, and there was only one I didn't recognize."

"That would probably be the Reaper," said Will with smug satisfaction.

"I must admit I've never heard of it."

Hannibal ended up eating some cornbread, which was the best idea in his case because the sweet fattiness would sooth the tongue.

Will grinned, "It's the hottest pepper in the world and is over one and a half million on the Scoville Scale and can go up to two million two hundred thousand Scoville Heat Units. I told you it was 5 Alarm Chili."

Hannibal nodded, this time taking a spoonful of chili with some rice. The rice would help neutralize the spice and a bit of corn bread afterward would save him trouble. Smart man. Quick learner.

Will looked down into his own mountain of chili where he dug a hole in the center and filled it with rice. Children usually did the opposite, but he'd been doing it for years. A habit that actually came with good memories.

A few moments later, Hannibal was pulling a large bay leaf from between his clamped teeth and Will smirked at how undignified it was. But also kind of charming too, in Hannibal's own special way of course. And he liked to see the prim and proper doctor doing normal, everyday human things.

"My father always said that if you found a bay leaf in your bowl, something good would happen to you."

"It's a nice tradition," said Hannibal, before depositing the leaf on his napkin. "I very much enjoy your chili, Will. It's nice to have something with heat to it every now and then."

Will tipped his head in gratitude.

They finished their meal with ease and Will had eaten a second bowl of chili, used to the flavors already, though experiencing that nice kick from the Reaper.

With Hannibal's word, he cleaned up the man's side of the table and told him to stay put. Will returned with two glasses of milk and murmur of, "Drink that and eat one more piece of cornbread, they'll cleanse the palate so you don't mix the spice of the peppers with the sweetness of the chocolate."

Will left again, coming in with a large plate of chocolate fudge sliced into large chunks.

"You've had fudge, right?" he asked. One had to be sure with someone like Hannibal Lecter. Was fudge perhaps too low on his scale?

"Yes."

"Probably of better quality though."

Hannibal took a bite and smiled as he rolled the chocolate around a bit, cataloguing the flavor. "Actually, I prefer this much more."

The dubious look Will sent him must have said something because Hannibal stood from his seat and slipped around the table much like a predator would, to crowd into Will's personal space. He seemed to like doing that a lot. Testing boundaries and making Will as uncomfortable as possible. Just what Hannibal seemed to love doing.

"Will, I would very much like to sample your cooking again."

"...Okay."

Hannibal leaned a little closer, backing Will against this chair. Just when Will thought Hannibal was going to kiss him for some silly reason, Hannibal's lips stopped just at Will's, only slightly brushing against them.

He then took a deep breath through the nose and pulled away abruptly. "Will, have you lost time recently or sleep walked again?"

Surprised at the non-sequitur, Will blinked a few times to bring himself back to the present. "Today. Or last night I guess. I was at the store and when I blinked, it was one in the afternoon and I was stirring chili."

"Will," Hannibal started, bringing his hands to Will's own, they were big and warm. "When I was younger, I was able to determine that my professor had cancer, long before they did. I simply smelled it. I can smell something on you. It's much stronger now. When you asked if I had smelled you, to be honest I did. I thought I smelled something, but your horrid aftershave was concealing it. Now however, it's stronger and I think you should see another neurologist."

The hell?

"There's… something wrong with me? And I'm not so sure about the neurologist, if you remember what happened to the last one." That had been a whole trip he didn't want to remember, thank you very much.

"Will, please. You are my friend and I… don't want to see you in pain."

"Just a friend?" Will asked before he could stop himself, mind flashing back to the almost-kiss.

Hannibal smirked, "Perhaps more, but I would feel more comfortable knowing that you are well in mind and body before advancing anything."

"O-okay." That took a turn he hadn't expected!

"Dinner was lovely," Hannibal added, taking another piece of fudge, slowly placing it between his lips and sucking on it. It was almost too suggestive.

Will's heart pounded obscenely.

Hannibal helped put everything away and when Will disappeared into the bathroom, he removed the stashed fishing lures.

He was not going to frame Will, he decided. He'd earn Will's loyalty through heroism. Hannibal being the one to discover Will's illness and then push for treatment would surely bring Will closer to himself.

Seeing Will so at ease was nice. The light banter and the good food. Hannibal wouldn't mind coming home to something like that once in a while. Will happy to see him, flushed from

Hannibal's praise. Praise that he deserved all the time. Hannibal liked that Will enjoyed his praise.

And it wouldn't take much after all the secrets Will had been sharing as of late.

"I'll come by in the morning and take you to the clinic. I can pull some strings to get you in very soon."

Will had nodded, looking confused but accepting.

The next morning, Hannibal had driven them to the same center they had visited last time. He smooth-talked his way into an early meeting with the new doctor and convinced the young woman that Will needed to be scanned immediately.

As he thought, the results eventually came back positive for Encephalitis and a tumor. The tumor was not there the first time. Hannibal had to stifle the growl that longed to burst forth. It had gone too far. That was not part of the plan but then again, the human body could never truly be controlled.

"It seems Dr. Sutcliffe either misdiagnosed you, or withheld the information from you," said Hannibal. The other doctor looked horrified at the suggestion.

"We'll help you get better," Hannibal promised, running a soothing hand down Will's arm in hopes of getting him to associate Hannibal with ease and comfort.

Hannibal called Jack to inform him about Will's condition and that he was required to take off from work for the next month at least in order for the immunotherapy to begin working. Jack was not happy, but he couldn't do anything as two doctors were vouching for Will, along with Hannibal.

In the meantime, Hannibal would be taking Will to his house. Alana had agreed to watch the dogs. Hannibal would take the time to remove all evidence he left around Will's home and everything would be right as rain.

All he had to do now was find another scapegoat.

Chilton was becoming quite the nuisance.

When Will made a full recovery, something occurred to him and he wondered why he never noticed before. He watched Hannibal cook some pig kidneys, mind whirling through all he'd learned from Jack Crawford and old photos of crime scenes.

A cultured man, exotic, in his forties or fifties. Had an artistic flair, hated the rude, insisted that psychopaths weren't crazy and knew exactly what they were doing. It was all so obvious. A body was found, '*a supercilious pig*' was the meal Hannibal served the day after. Trophies being taken but no evidence ever found. Because it was being consumed.

Hannibal was the Chesapeake Ripper. Hannibal was a cannibal.

Without the Encephalitis to fuck his brain up, it was easy to see now.

And the kidneys he was currently cooking, had probably come from a person.

Will stared at the pan, wondering why he wasn't disgusted. The Chesapeake Ripper had taken Miriam Lass and had even left an arm in the open to taunt Jack. Hannibal either had her alive or dead somewhere and frozen in ice.

Will should be running. Calling Jack to tell him what he knew. Yet he was sitting in a serial killer's kitchen, preparing to eat the kidneys of some poor sap.

What was wrong with him? Before the Encephalitis, he was certain he'd be disgusted and wouldn't hesitate. But he'd kept secrets before.

Abigail had killed Nicholas Boyle and Will had never said anything. He promised he wouldn't do it. Hannibal wanted to protect Abigail from Jack and a lifetime of suffering. So he *did* care on some level, right? Hannibal helped Will when he was ill.

Hannibal listened to and engaged Will in conversation that he actually cared to pay attention to.

"You're thinking really hard, Will. Are you well?"

He looked up, meeting Hannibal's gaze. He weighed his options, but there was something he really wanted to know first.

"Hannibal… does Abigail know you're the Ripper?"

There was silence in the kitchen and Hannibal merely stared for a moment, before returning to stirring the contents of the pan. Almost too calm about the sudden question.

"She knows… many things. Including the fact that you know about Nicholas Boyle. She fears you will report her because you are disgusted with the ugliness in it."

Not an admission but not a denial either.

It all came down to what Will said, it seemed.

"I would never tell."

He meant it in every way. He wouldn't. He'd take it to his grave because she didn't deserve to be held accountable for her father's choices and actions.

"And if you were to learn that she had to survive against her father, by helping him, what would you do?"

She had helped him? Abigail had been an accomplice in the crimes. Then… Jack had been right. But Will knew. He knew that Garret would shift his attention to her if there were no more victims. He understood the man's desire to keep her forever. Abigail would have eventually been a victim too, and no one wanted to be a victim.

'*She had to survive*,' Hannibal had said. Abigail was just living on borrowed time every minute she spent with her father. She was a victim as well.

"I still wouldn't tell. She's a survivor, not a monster. I'm not sure what I would have done had I been in her shoes, but I don't… fault her for wanting to live."

Hannibal smiled then, like he was proud.

"And me, would you fault me for enjoying my life?"

"I don't… really understand you," admitted Will. "The Ripper has always been difficult to understand and I've gotten closer than anyone else has. You kill because they are simply pigs to you. Rude, crude, and meant to feed you. You elevate them in status. Make their existence worth something finally.

"I'm not sure how I feel. I know how I *should* feel, but I've got nothing right now."

Hannibal looked over, "Is your heart rate normal?"

"Yes."

"It could be a sign."

"Of?" asked Will, knowing Hannibal was going somewhere with it all.

"That perhaps your mind and body are accepting of carnage. That you were born to understand it on an intimate level. And perhaps you have finally come into your own."

Will sat calmly as Hannibal plated up their dinner and situated his own meal in front of him. He looked at the chopped pieces of kidney and frowned, wondering if he should just do it. He'd already done it several times already and it had tasted good then. Was there really a difference now that he knew the origins of said kidneys?

With very obvious motions, Will lifted a piece and placed it on his tongue, allowing Hannibal to see the decision he'd made. Hannibal's smile could fell angels.

"Oh, how I adore you, dear Will."

The admission made his heart flutter with the promise of the future.

~.O.~

A/N: It is finished!

How was it? Let me know!

Check out my many other fics!

See ya! :D Luv u lots.

CHECK ME OUT ON TUMBLR. HELLY-WATERMELONSMELLINFELLON.

End Notes

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Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!